

**The offending histories of homicide offenders: Are men who kill intimate partners
distinct from men who kill other men?**

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Abstract

Objective: Limited research has studied the offending histories of homicide offenders across victim-offender relationships. An emphasis on offending histories may assist in identifying opportunities for criminal justice interventions, but it remains unclear whether these histories differ across different victim-offender relationship types. The aim of this study is to compare the offending histories of male intimate partner homicide (IPH) offenders and male-on-male homicide (MMH) offenders.

Method: The data consist of self-reported offending histories collected through interviews with 203 men convicted of murder or manslaughter in Australia. IPH offenders (n=68) were compared with MMH offenders (n=135) across four areas (prevalence, frequency, versatility, and age of onset) using binary logistic regressions.

Results: IPH offenders reported lower offending prevalence, less frequent and versatile offending, and later offending onset compared with MMH offenders.

Conclusions: Both IPH and MMH offenders have a history of offending, though the extensiveness of this offending differs. Thus, IPH men may be less likely to come to the attention of the criminal justice system and, when they do, they may not be classified as 'high-risk'. The challenge is ensuring that other areas of risk are recognized and responded to in appropriate ways through effective screening or surveillance.

Introduction

Scholars have increasingly applied the 'criminal career' framework, long used for the study of criminal offending more generally, to the study of homicide specifically (e.g. Farrington, Loeber, & Berg, 2012). Briefly, the criminal career framework seeks to understand the development, progression, and pattern/s of offending between and within individuals, mainly by using a longitudinal approach (see Piquero, Farrington, & Blumstein, 2003). This approach, in turn, can inform a range of targeted public policy interventions.

Many homicide offenders have extensive prior contact with police and other criminal justice agencies (Cook, Ludwig, & Braga, 2005). This suggests, firstly, that a focus on offending histories can meaningfully inform understandings of pathways to homicide perpetration, and secondly, that the presence of a (potentially extensive) offending history among homicide offenders may open the possibility for the criminal justice system to be used as a critical point for targeted interventions with high-risk individuals (Farrington, Loeber, & Berg, 2012; Soothill, Francis, & Liu, 2008; Wright, Pratt, & DeLisi, 2008).

However, although a focus on offending histories can reveal important information about offenders' pathways to perpetrating lethal violence, there remain gaps in knowledge about whether different 'types' of homicide offenders display different offending. It has been argued, for example, that men who kill their female intimate partners should be considered a distinct group of homicide offenders (e.g., Dobash & Dobash, 2015; Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Lewis, 2004; Felson, 2006). However, evidence in this area remains equivocal.

In terms of homicide prevention, it is important to consider the possibility of heterogeneity among homicide offenders, and to evaluate whether – and how – a focus on offending histories can contribute to improved identification of heterogeneity and, in turn, shape more effective and tailored responses to individuals at risk. A comparison of intimate partner with other homicide offenders represents an important focal point for such study. One in seven homicides globally are perpetrated by intimate partners, with the likelihood of victimization higher for women than for men (Stöckl et al., 2013). In Australia, where the current study takes place, one in five homicides are perpetrated by intimate partners, with 75 percent of victims comprising women (Cussen & Bryant, 2015a).

A key issue in understanding heterogeneity among homicide offenders is, therefore, whether the offending histories of men who kill their female intimate partners resemble those of other homicide offenders. We use interview data from 203 convicted male homicide

offenders to address this knowledge gap. The purpose of the research is to examine whether men who kill female intimate partners display differences in self-reported offending histories to men who kill other men outside the context of an intimate relationship. Our study extends current literature on offending histories of homicide offenders, possible heterogeneity of homicide offenders, and possibilities for homicide intervention across various contexts. Developmental and life-course criminology scholars note the importance of examining the various dimensions that form part of a person's criminal career across the life-course, including prevalence and frequency of past offending, criminal versatility, and age of offending onset (Blumstein, Cohen, Roth, & Visher, 1986). In this study, we use concepts from the criminal career framework to examine differences across four areas of offending history: (1) prevalence, (2) frequency, (3) versatility, and (4) age of onset.

The Role of the Victim-Offender Relationship

The existing literature remains divided in terms of whether men who commit intimate partner homicide (IPH) differ to men who kill others (i.e., non-intimates). Empirical evidence indicates ambiguity around whether there are different offending pathways to homicide, depending on the victim-offender relationship. For example, data from the Murder in Britain study show differences in life experiences and behavioral conduct across the life course for IPH men compared to men who kill other men (Dobash & Dobash, 2015; Dobash et al., 2004). These data reveal that men who kill other men are more likely to have problematic upbringings (e.g., father violent), early contact with criminal justice agencies, and alcohol and drug problems, while IPH men are more likely to have perpetrated violence in past relationships. Findings such as these have been used to support the view that IPH men represent a specific subcategory of homicide offenders, who typically have a limited criminal history and who have only used violence within intimate relationships.

However, others suggest that men's violence towards intimate partners has the same

etiology of violence towards non-intimates, and treats that etiology as being the same irrespective of victim-offender relationship (Felson, 2006). There is some empirical support for this perspective (Felson & Lane, 2010; Felson & Messner, 1998). For example, Felson and Lane (2010) found few differences in terms of self-reported childhood abuse, official criminal history, and alcohol/drug use between offenders who had assaulted or killed their partners and offenders who had assaulted or killed others. These findings suggest that men who commit IPH may also be generally violent in a non-intimate context, and have offending histories that resemble non-IPH offenders.

The Offending Histories of Homicide Offenders

Given the seriousness of homicide, it would be expected that such offenders would have offending histories characterized by early initiation into delinquency and anti-social conduct, high frequency offending, and more versatile behavior. Such expectations are consistent with theory (e.g., Moffitt, 1993; Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 1989) and prior research on serious offending pathways (e.g., Piquero, Farrington, & Blumstein, 2007; Wolfgang, Figlio, & Sellin, 1987). What is unclear is whether different ‘types’ of homicide offenders display different offending histories, which is the focus of the current study.

Until recently, few studies have specifically examined whether and how the offending histories of IPH offenders differ compared with other victim-offender categories, despite data showing that the majority of homicide offenders have previously been in contact with the criminal justice system (Cook et al., 2005; Farrington et al., 2012; Ganpat, Liem, van der Leun, & Nieuwbeerta, 2014; Wright et al., 2008). Importantly, the emerging research reveals contradictory findings. For example, examining court and correctional documents in the state of Indiana, Thomas et al. (2011) found that men convicted of murdering an intimate partner were equally likely to have had prior arrests compared with men convicted of murdering a non-partner (92.4% and 92.5% respectively). The two groups also shared similarities in terms

of number of prior arrests and prevalence of specific offence types, including assault/battery and theft/burglary, though men convicted of murdering a non-partner were more likely to have participated in juvenile offenses. Based on data from the Finnish Homicide Monitoring Program, Kivivuori and Lehti (2012) concluded that IPH offenders share similarities with other homicide offenders in terms of official criminal history. Their data also show, however, considerably lower prevalence of court convictions and prison time for IPH men compared with men who kill other men (related and unrelated). These disaggregate data suggest that although a proportion of IPH men may have a history of contact with the criminal justice system, men who kill non-intimates may be even more likely to have a prior offending record. Other research shows similar findings. Using data from the Murder in Britain study, Dobash et al. (2004) found that although men who had murdered intimate partners frequently displayed a history of criminal behavior and contact with the criminal justice system, men who had murdered other men were more likely to display persistent criminal behavior (80.5% compared with 59.6%) and to have prior incarcerations (45.8% compared with 32%).

However, many studies, particularly those relying on official data, are not able to distinguish the specific type of past offending (e.g., theft, assault, robbery, property damage) and, importantly, whether the offender had been violent in past intimate relationships. Also, it should be noted that different studies have typically examined different aspects of offending history (such as prevalence or frequency), which may lead to different conclusions about relationships between offending history and homicide offending. It is clear that further research is warranted, given the mixed findings in prior studies. Crucially, to assist in better understanding and potentially resolving some of the inconsistencies that have emerged in past research, it appears necessary to consider a range of different aspects of offending history (prevalence, age of onset, versatility and frequency), to discern how each of those individual elements may separately relate to homicide, and to determine what each different element of

past offending may reveal about homicide offending.

Study Focus

As illustrated, the literature is divided on the issue of whether male IPH offenders are similar to, or different from, men who kill other men. Moreover, relatively little research has used concepts drawn from the criminal career framework (including prevalence, age of onset, versatility and frequency) to examine offending histories. In the current study, we analyze data collected through interviews with male offenders convicted of murder or manslaughter in Australia. Our overall aim is to examine whether and how male IPH offenders (n=68) differ from men who kill other men (n=135) in terms of offending history. To do so, our research questions are as follows: Do male IPH offenders differ from men who kill other men in terms of (1) past prevalence of offending; (2) age of offending onset; (3) offending versatility; and (4) offending frequency?

Method

Data Source and Sample Refinement

This research examines whether men who kill female intimate partners display differences across self-reported offending histories (prevalence, frequency, versatility, and age of onset) to men who kill other men outside the context of an intimate relationship. We used data from the Australian Homicide Project, which is a comprehensive study of homicide in Australia. The project was approved by the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee and complies with APA ethical standards. The data are based upon comprehensive interviews conducted between 2009 and 2013 with 262 male offenders convicted of murder or manslaughter (Mazerolle, Eriksson, Wortley, & Johnson, 2017).

The interviews were conducted at state-based correctional centers (i.e., prisons) (90.8%) and probation and parole centers (9.2%) across Australia. Five female research staff conducted the interviews after receiving extensive training in interview protocols and distress

management procedures. Prior to the interview, respondents were informed of the potential risks associated with participation and the voluntary nature of the research. A modest amount of compensation was provided to respondents to compensate for their time in jurisdictions that allowed for it. Only respondents able to provide informed consent were interviewed. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, with responses recorded onto an interview schedule. The interviews lasted approximately 1-2 hours.

Of the 262 males interviewed, two-thirds (66.7%) reported non-Indigenous Australian ethnic background and one in seven (14.6%) participants identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders. The remainder (18.7%) reported other ethnic backgrounds (including, but not limited to, European, New Zealander, and Asian). Approximately one-quarter (28.2%) were unemployed at the time of the homicide. Only one-third (31.4%) reported that they had completed high school. At the time of the interview participants were on average 42.9 years of age (range: 21-73). In terms of legal outcomes, 222 (84.7%) were convicted of murder and 40 (15.3%) were convicted of manslaughter.¹

Variables

Type of homicide. Respondents self-reported their relationship with the person they killed, as well as the gender of the victim. We used these data to refine the sample. Men who had killed their female intimate partners (*IPH*=1; *n*=68) were compared with men who had killed other men (*MMH*=0; *n*=135). Similar to Dobash et al. (2004), men who had killed women outside of the context of an intimate relationship (*n*=49) were excluded from the analyses. Further, the MMH offender group excluded filicides (*n*=5), victims under the age of

¹ We chose to combine murder and manslaughter cases for two reasons. First, we were interested in illegal killings as opposed to legal outcomes. Not only is mens rea difficult for judges and juries to establish to establish, but various factors may also reduce charges from murder to manslaughter (e.g. plea bargains and defenses to murder). Second, we wanted to ensure our analyses are internationally comparative. As legal constructs, murder and manslaughter differ across jurisdictions).

15 (n=4) and same-sex relationships (n=1).² Although it is important to understand the dynamics of these types of homicides, research from Australia and other countries suggests that filicides (Eriksson, Mazerolle, Wortley, & Johnson, 2016; Kivivuori & Lehti, 2012), child homicides (Dearden & Jones, 2008) and same-sex IPH (Gannoni & Cussen, 2014; Mize & Shackelford, 2008) display unique characteristics (e.g., cause of death and motive) that distinguish them from other homicides. Of the IPH men, 37.9% were married, 24.2% were in de facto relationships (living together as a couple but not legally married), 4.5% were in 'dating' relationships, and a further 33.3% were separated from their intimate partner at the time of the homicide.

Offending prevalence. Respondents were asked about their offending histories. As per Table 1, we examined self-reported prevalence across seven offending categories (theft and related offenses, obtaining benefit by deception, property damage, assault, dealing or trafficking in illicit drugs, robbery, and intimate partner violence). Each of these categories was dichotomized (0=*no prevalence*; 1=*prevalence*) to measure whether an offender had engaged in that offending behavior at any point during their life up until the homicide.

[Table 1 here]

As per Table 1, the offence category of intimate partner violence (IPV) consisted of a composite variable to measure self-reported history of any IPV, either against the homicide victim (in cases of IPH) or against other intimate partners (including former). We created this variable by combining three separate measures and then dichotomizing the composite variable. First, we used the Physical Assault (12 items) and the Sexual Coercion (7 items) ever prevalence sub-scales of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2; Straus, Hamby, & Warren, 2003) to measure perpetration of violence in the current or most recent relationship.

² During the interviews respondents were asked detailed questions about the nature of their relationship with the victim (e.g., victim demographics, relationship status, relationship duration, living arrangements, violence and conflict). We are confident that our careful examination of the victim-offender relationship has minimized any potential under-reporting of same-sex intimate relationships.

Second, perpetration of violence against a previous partner was measured through the use of three items constructed by the research team. These questions asked whether respondents had ever been physically or sexually violent towards previous partners, and whether any previous partners needed medical treatment as a result of the respondent's violence. Third, we included a self-reported measure of whether an intimate partner had ever taken out a violence apprehension order (also referred to as restraining/protection orders) against the respondent. We created a dichotomous measure of a history of IPV perpetration (0=*no IPV*; 1=*IPV*) by combining all of the items described above (CTS2, violence in previous relationships, and violence apprehension orders).

It should be noted that although there is a conceptual overlap between 'IPV' and 'assault', these variables were measured and operationalized separately in the current study. As per Table 1, assault was measured through questions regarding offender violence (or threats thereof) without reference to victim-offender relationship, whereas IPV was operationalized to measure violence in intimate relationships specifically. Although approximately four in five (82%) offenders who reported a history of IPV also reported a history of assault, preliminary analyses (chi-square) revealed no significant association between these two variables ($\chi^2=0.22$, $p=.640$).

In addition to separate offence categories, we also wanted to examine participation in *any* of the seven offence categories. We therefore created an overall offending index by combining the seven categories listed in Table 1. This overall offending index was dichotomized to measure whether an offender had engaged in any or none of the seven offence categories (where 0=*none*; 1=*any*). As a history of IPV may be particularly prevalent among IPH offenders (Dobash & Dobash, 2015), we also created an index that included all variables listed in Table 1 except for IPV (where 0=*none*; 1=*any*).

Age of offending onset. Respondents were asked how old they were the first time

they engaged in each of the self-reported offences listed in Table 1. We were not able to examine age of offending for IPV since the scales used to measure IPV did not include questions about age of onset. We created an overall age of onset variable, measuring the lowest age an individual reported engaging in any of the offences. Individuals without a self-reported history of offending were coded as the age at which they committed the homicide offense for which they were serving a sentence. We dichotomized the age of onset variable due to the non-normal distribution of the data. In line with other homicide research (e.g., Dobash & Dobash, 2015; Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, Smith, & Medina-Ariza, 2007; Loeber et al., 2005), we dichotomized the sample using the age of 13 as a cut-off.³ Individuals aged 12 or under at the time of their first offense were classified as *'early onset'* (coded as 0; 48.2%) and individuals aged 13 or over were classified as *'late onset'* (coded as 1; 51.8%).

Offending versatility. We measured offending versatility by summing the number of offense categories (listed in Table 1) the respondents had engaged in prior to the homicide. Thus, the minimum versatility score possible was 0 and the maximum was 7. A score of 0 indicates that the respondent had not engaged in offending behavior prior to the homicide. Similar to Wright et al. (2008), we recognize that the inclusion of offenders without an offending history skews the data towards specialization (i.e., low versatility). Of the full sample, 6.1 per cent reported no offending prior to the homicide. Nevertheless, in line with Wright et al. (2008), this should not affect analyses examining *differences* between the groups, since similar proportions of MMH and IPH offenders reported involvement in any offending (including IPV) prior to the homicide (see Results).

Offending frequency. Respondents were asked how frequently across their lifetime (prior to the homicide) they had engaged in the offending behaviors listed in Table 1. We

³ Some scholars have used 10 as a measure of early age of onset (e.g., Dobash et al., 2004; Felson, 2006). We ran the analyses using both 10 and 13 as the cut-off, and the analyses revealed similar results.

were not able to examine frequency of offending for IPV since although some items upon which our measure of IPV is based allow for frequency estimates these are limited to small sub-samples (e.g., CTS2 chronicity scales, which measure frequency in the past 12 months only). Responses were recorded on a 4-point Likert scale: 1 (*never*), 2 (*occasionally*), 3 (*often*), and 4 (*very often*). The scores were summated to create an overall offending frequency scale. Due to non-normal distribution, we divided the scale into three categories: 0=*low frequency* (lower tertile), 1=*mid-level frequency*, and 2=*high frequency* (upper tertile).

Demographics. We controlled for offender age (continuous variable) at the time they committed the homicide. It is important to take age composition of the sample into account, as it may be related to various criminal career concepts (Blumstein et al., 1986). For example, older offenders are more likely to display high offending versatility since they have had longer time to offend (Wright et al., 2008). Preliminary bivariate analyses showed that the IPH offenders were on average older ($\bar{X}=38.3$) compared with the MMH offenders ($\bar{X}=27.5$) when they committed the homicide ($t(99.3)=-7.19, p=.000$). Preliminary regression analyses further showed that offender age at the time of the homicide was a statistically significant predictor of type of homicide in all adjusted models (i.e., associated with an increased likelihood of a homicide being classified as IPH).

In our preliminary analyses we initially also controlled for self-reported Indigenous status (where 0=*not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander*; 1=*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander*). We did this for two reasons. First, the proportion of homicides that occur within the family unit is higher for Indigenous compared to non-Indigenous Australians (Cussen & Bryant, 2015b). Second, Indigenous Australians are significantly more likely to have had high-frequent contact with the criminal justice system compared to non-Indigenous Australians (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). The preliminary analyses showed that Indigenous status was not a statistically significant predictor of type of homicide in any of the

models, and that the effect of the predictor variables remained the same irrespective of whether Indigenous status was included in the adjusted models or not. We therefore decided to exclude Indigenous status as a predictor variable.

Analytical Approach

In this study we examine whether and how male IPH offenders differ from men who kill other men across four areas of offending histories: prevalence of offending; age of offending onset; criminal versatility; and frequency of offending. To examine differences across the two groups (IPH and MMH), we performed binary logistic regression analyses for each individual offending variable using a five per cent threshold to ascertain significant results.⁴ The regressions provide the likelihood of predicting homicide categorization. In other words, the binary outcome variable was type of homicide (MMH=0 and IPH=1). An OR of <1 indicates a decreased likelihood of any given variable (e.g. early age of offending onset) predicting IPH categorization, while an OR of >1 indicates an increased likelihood. The unadjusted models demonstrate bivariate relationships between prediction of IPH and one predictor variable at a time (e.g., prevalence of theft). As detailed above, in the adjusted models we controlled for the effects of age at time of homicide offense in all models (with the exception of the model in which we examine age of offending onset).⁵ Sample sizes and missing values for each of the variables are detailed in Table 2. Missing values were not imputed. Listwise deletion was used in all models. Only results from models with a good fit (as per chi-square goodness-of-fit and Hosmer-Lemeshow tests) are presented. Nevertheless, models with a poor fit are equally important for interpretation purposes, as they indicate that the inclusion of predictor variable(s) is not significantly different from an intercept-only model. We did not include all individual predictor variables (i.e. prevalence, age of onset,

⁴ We acknowledge that the relatively small sample used in our study increases the likelihood of Type II errors. In that context, we assert that the observed differences are arguably conservative. For transparency, frequency counts and valid percentages are provided where relevant (see Tables 3-6).

⁵ Since it cannot reasonably be argued that age at the time of the homicide affects age at which an offender committed their first offense.

versatility and frequency) in a final logistic regression model as the four criminal career dimensions were highly inter-correlated (as measured by r , VIF, and Tolerance), and as such would cause concerns with multicollinearity. This is in line with past research showing that, for example, early age of onset is, in and of itself, predictive of versatile offending patterns and high offending frequency (see Moffitt, 1993; Piquero et al., 2003).

[Table 2 here]

Results

Offending Prevalence

To answer our first research question, namely whether male IPH offenders differ from MMH offenders in terms of past prevalence of offending, we performed separate regression models for each of the seven specific offense types. The prevalence was consistently higher for the MMH group compared with the IPH group across the offenses, with the single exception of intimate partner violence (IPV) (see Table 3). Net of the effect of offender age at time of the homicide, the adjusted regressions show that while a self-reported history of assault, robbery, theft, and dealing/trafficking in illicit drugs individually decreased the likelihood that a homicide would be classified as IPH, a history of IPV significantly *increased* this likelihood by over three-fold.

[Table 3 here]

We then performed two separate binary logistic regression models to examine the likelihood of *overall* offending (including and excluding IPV in the index). Overall, the prevalence of prior offending was high within both groups (see Table 3). When a history of IPV perpetration was included in the overall offending index, the prevalence rate was similar across the groups, with approximately nine in ten offenders self-reporting perpetrating one or more offense types. The results further confirmed that offending history did not predict type of homicide net of the effect of the control variable. When prior IPV was excluded from the

prior offending index, however, the presence of an offending history decreased the likelihood (albeit only just reaching statistical significance) that a homicide would be classified as IPH (controlling for age at homicide offense).

Age of Offending Onset

Our second research question was whether male IPH offenders differ from MMH offenders in terms of age of offending onset. The results displayed in Table 4 show that an early onset of offending (12 and below) was more prevalent among the MMH offenders compared with the IPH offenders. The analyses show that a late onset of offending was associated with more than a two-fold likelihood that a homicide would be classified as IPH.

[Table 4 here]

Offending Versatility

Our third research question was whether male IPH offenders differ from MMH offenders in terms of offending versatility. Table 5 presents the results of analyses examining differences in offending versatility between the MMH and the IPH groups. Results show that the MMH group had perpetrated a wider variety of crimes compared with the IPH group, even after adjusting for offender age at the time of the homicide. The adjusted model shows a decreased likelihood that a homicide would be classified as IPH with each increase in the versatility index.

[Table 5 here]

Offending Frequency

Our final research question was whether male IPH offenders differ from MMH offenders in terms of offending frequency. Table 6 presents the results of the offending frequency analyses. Overall, the frequency of past offending was significantly predictive of type of homicide ($p = .000$). Controlling for age at the time of the homicide, medium and high frequency offending decreased the likelihood that a homicide would be classified as

IPH, when compared with the no/low frequency group.

[Table 6 here]

Discussion

Some scholars argue that men who are violent towards intimate partners share characteristics with men who are violent in other settings (e.g., Felson, 2006). This perspective is sometimes contrasted with the argument that men who perpetrate violence in intimate relationships are distinctly different to other violent men (e.g., Daly & Wilson, 1988; Dobash et al., 2004; Heise & Kotsadam, 2015). In this study we used concepts from the criminal career framework to empirically examine whether and how the offending histories of men who kill female intimate partners differ from men who kill other men. Our research aim was to examine whether and how male IPH offenders differ from MMH offenders in terms of offending history, as measured by: (1) prevalence of offending, (2) age of offending onset, (3) offending versatility, and (4) offending frequency.

Using self-report data from men convicted of murder or manslaughter in Australia, overall our findings reveal statistically significant differences across age of onset, versatility, frequency and most of the prevalence variables. The MMH men more commonly reported a history of perpetrating assault, robbery, and theft, and dealing/trafficking in illicit drugs prior to the homicide, while the IPH men more commonly reported perpetration of violence in intimate relationships. MMH offenders further had a lower age of offending onset, had perpetrated a wider variety of offenses, and reported a higher frequency of past offending compared with the IPH men. This indicates that men who kill female intimate partners may have different pathways to homicide perpetration than men who kill others. Our results are similar to parts of the existing literature (Caman et al., 2017; Dobash et al., 2004) yet contradictory to some studies (Felson & Lane, 2010; Felson & Messner, 1998). The reasons for the inconsistencies between our findings and parts of the literature require further

clarification, though our use of self-report data (as opposed to official records, e.g. Felson & Messner, 1998; Thomas et al., 2011) and exclusive focus on lethal (as opposed to non-lethal, e.g. Felson & Lane, 2010) violence may offer some explanations. In addition, the present study included several aspects of past offending, including frequency, versatility and age of onset, which few past studies have examined.

Nevertheless, there were very few differences in terms of *overall* offending prevalence. The vast majority of both IPH and MMH men in the sample reported committing some type of offense prior to the homicide. This suggests that while the extensiveness of past offending differs (as measured by age of onset, versatility, frequency and specific offences), the majority of both types of offenders still display a history of some form of offending. This contradicts the perception that some IPH homicides occur ‘out of the blue’, without any signs of known risk factors (see also Dobash & Dobash, 2015; Dobash, Dobash, & Cavanagh, 2009; Juodis, Starzomski, Porter, & Woodworth, 2014). This finding highlights the importance of research that complements official law enforcement records with self-report measures of offending (for further discussions see Farrington & Ttofi, 2014; Lewis, Dobash, Dobash, & Cavanagh, 2003; Mazerolle, Eriksson, Wortley, & Johnson, 2015).

This important similarity across the groups may suggest the need to consider variations among IPH men (and among MMH men). The literature on non-lethal intimate partner violence (IPV) reveals discrete offender sub-categories (e.g., Johnson, 2008; though these differences may be more ‘in degree’ than ‘in kind’, see Theobald, Farrington, Coid, & Piquero, 2015) and emerging homicide research shows similar findings (e.g., Dixon, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Browne, 2008). For example, analyses of institutional records such as psychological reports and police statements have revealed three separate categories of male IPH perpetrators: (1) high criminality / high psychopathology, (2) low-moderate criminality / high psychopathology, (3) low criminality / low psychopathology (Dixon et al.,

2008). Given the possibility of heterogeneity among IPH men, there may be a sub-group of IPH men who share similarities with a sub-group of MMH offenders across various aspects of their offending histories (e.g., the high criminality / high psychopathology men in Dixon et al.'s sample), although further research is required to establish the validity of such hypotheses. Homicide scholars further need to consider the theoretical implications of IPH heterogeneity. Here we can draw inspiration from the significant theoretical advancements made within the non-lethal IPV literature to address offender diversity across aspects such as violence and coercive control (e.g., Johnson, 2008).

At the same time, scholars caution against overstating differences across IPH men. For example, Dobash et al. (2009) argue that although IPH men may differ in terms of prior offending patterns, they share other characteristics, such as feelings of entitlement and a need to control aspects of their partner's life (see also Dobash & Dobash, 2015; Polk, 1994). Scholars further suggest that oftentimes men who are violent against intimate partners fail to accept personal responsibility for their behavior, construct their violence as 'incidental', and minimize or deny the scope and severity of their violence (Dobash & Dobash, 2011; Hearn, 1998; Weldon & Gilchrist, 2012). In the current study we found that almost one in five offenders who reported a history of IPV perpetration (as operationalized using CTS2 and other measures) responded negatively to the more general question of whether they had ever assaulted anyone. In other words, our results showed a discrepancy between behavioral measures (e.g., hitting/slapping) and conceptual terminology (e.g., 'assault'). This parallels Wood's (2004, p. 565-567) finding that some men who perpetrate IPV dissociate themselves from 'real abusers' by referring to the incongruity of their *acts of violence* and their self-perceived *non-violent personalities* (e.g., "I didn't mean to do it. And really, deep down in my heart, that ain't me...") or the ways in which they actively limit their violence (e.g., "I did smack her a couple of times when she wasn't pregnant, but when she was pregnant I never

put my hands on her.”) Further research is needed to examine differences between various operationalizations of IPV within homicide offender samples to examine the extent to which homicide offenders may deny, minimize or deflect their own actions.

Limitations

Scholars, coroners, and practitioners have the benefit of hindsight by *retrospectively* searching for indications of risk, including the nature of offenders’ offending histories. It is important to acknowledge that homicides, in comparison to non-lethal violence, represent rare events and knowledge gained after the fact may be difficult to convert to prediction. Longitudinal research, though optimal (Loeber & Le Blanc, 1990; Piquero et al., 2003), is scarce. In this study we used cross-sectional data collected retrospectively, which is generally a less valid approach of establishing temporal sequences of events. Nevertheless, we contend that our data provide an important contribution to research through self-report data from a large sample of homicide offenders that allow for analyses across victim-offender relationships. This type of data is valuable, yet rare, within the homicide literature.

Nevertheless, a number of considerations need to be taken into account when interpreting the findings. Firstly, given that this study contrasted men who had killed a *female* intimate partner to men who had killed another *male*, it may well be that the differences discerned is a factor of the gender of the victim as opposed to victim-relationship. Future studies will need to examine whether these results hold constant in analyses comparing men who kill female partners with men who kill other women, as well as same-sex IPH. In addition, there is merit in considering other factors highlighted in debates about the causes and contributors to violence, such as gender, power, and control (e.g., Felson, 2014), and how those factors may vary across victim-offender relationships and across offending participation. This is particularly interesting given the relatively high proportion (33.3%) of IPH offenders in our sample who were separated from their partner at the time of the

homicide, which is in line with the substantial body of literature identifying separation as a risk factor for IPH (e.g., Campbell, Webster, & Glass, 2009; Daly & Wilson, 1988).

Other important considerations for this study are memory recall and the reliability of offender accounts. The issues with using self-report data to ascertain details of a person's offending history, including memory retrieval problems and telescoping, are well documented (e.g., Junger-Tas & Marshall, 1999). To specifically address the subject of memory recall, the Australian Homicide Project interviews included the use of the life event calendar methodology, which has been shown to enhance recall of life events and circumstances (Roberts & Horney, 2010). Further, although there is merit in using offender accounts to ascertain involvement in offending activity, the reliability of such accounts (e.g. a lack of willingness to disclose the nature of their offences) can raise concerns. For example, meta-analytical research by Sugarman and Hotaling (1997) suggests a weak to moderate correlation between social desirability and the perpetration of non-lethal IPV. This poses a challenge to the current research, as social desirability has the potential to affect perpetrator accounts of past criminal activity such as IPV.

Another challenge in this study is our operationalization of IPV. IPV was measured using sub-scales from the CTS2 relating to physical and sexual violence in current or immediate past relationship, in combination with questions of physical and sexual violence in past relationships. This composite variable did not allow us to examine age of offending onset and offending frequency of IPV. In addition, the variable created for this study did not measure IPV in pregnancy, psychological abuse and coercive control within intimate relationships, which research suggests are important risk factors for IPH (Dobash & Dobash, 2015; Johnson et al., 2017). Future research is required to analyze whether and how age of IPV onset, number of intimate relationships in which the perpetrator has used violence, frequency and escalation of IPV, and psychological abuse and coercive control are associated

with lethal outcomes across victim-offender relationships.

Further, due to issues with multicollinearity we were not able to include all of the independent variables (prevalence, age of onset, frequency and versatility) into one single logistic regression model. This means that we cannot conclude that any particular variables are uniquely predictive of the outcome. However, we recognize the importance of understanding how these variables interact. Further research is needed to examine, for example, whether men who kill other men are more frequent offenders, more versatile offenders, or both, compared with IPH men.

Research, clinical and policy implications

The results from this study have some implications for preventing IPH and offending more generally. Our results illustrate that the association between high levels of offending frequency and versatility may apply more strongly to non-IPH than to IPH, implying that while the criminal justice system may certainly provide an important intervention point for potential non-IPH offenders, there is a need to develop more comprehensive means of identifying potential IPH offenders. Although the majority of IPH men in this study had engaged in some form of offending prior to the homicide, their involvement was characterized by lower frequency and versatility, compared with the MMH offenders. The effect of this is that IPH men may be less likely to come to the attention of the criminal justice system and, when they do, they may not be classified as high-risk due to their 'limited' offending history. The intervention and prevention challenge here is in ensuring other areas of risk in terms of precursors to IPV and IPH are recognized and responded to in appropriate ways through effective screening or surveillance (Johnson, Eriksson, Mazerolle, & Wortley, 2017). In other words, prevention efforts need to extend beyond the realm of the criminal justice system, or a substantial part of the problem will remain unaddressed (Cook et al., 2005). Health care professionals and victim support services are increasingly recognized

as central in the prevention of IPH, and a number of risk assessment tools have been developed for use in such settings (e.g., the Danger Assessment; Campbell, Webster, & Glass, 2009). Of course, on this note it is important to acknowledge that homicides are rare events and that far from all individuals who display certain characteristics in terms of deviancy and offending histories will go on to commit homicide (DeLisi, Piquero, & Cardwell, 2016).

The results from this study also highlight the significance of population-based early prevention strategies. Our results show that over half of MMH offenders and about one-third of IPH offenders had committed their first offense prior to the age of 13. A large body of research has found that early displays of problematic behavior are associated with a range of other negative outcomes later in life, such as drug use and sexual risk taking (Hayatbakhsh et al., 2008; Ramrakha, 2007). The consequences of early problem behavior and early delinquency can also foster risks for involvement in serious forms of violence including in the context of intimate relationships (Mazerolle, Maahs, & Bachman, 2000). Thus, it appears a broader preventative approach that examines early stages of development may have implications for crime and justice, and also public health and social welfare.

Conclusion

The literature remains divided on whether men who kill their intimate partners should be considered a distinct group of homicide offenders in terms of past offending. In this study, interview data with homicide offenders showed that while the majority of men who kill intimate partners and men who kill other men display a history of some form of offending, the extensiveness of that offending differs. Overall, these findings suggest differences between the two groups. Nevertheless, we also found some similarities across the groups, which may suggest heterogeneity *within* the IPH group. Further research is required to better understand the distinctiveness of IPH offenders compared with other homicide

offenders and the potential variations that exist among IPH men.

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Tables

Table 1. Operationalization of Theft and related offenses, Obtain benefit by deception, Property damage, Assault, Deal or traffic in illicit drugs, Robbery, Intimate partner violence)

Variables	Offending behaviors
Theft and related offenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stolen/tried to steal <\$50 • Stolen/tried to steal >\$50 • Taken car etc. without permission • Stolen/tried to steal motor vehicle • Bought/sold/held stolen goods
Obtain benefit by deception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tried to cheat someone by selling them something that was worthless or not what you said it was • Credit cards without permission
Property damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tagged/graffitied walls, bus panels, trains, or other public places • Purposely damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to you • Purposely set fire to a building, a car, or other property, or tried to do so
Assault	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Got involved in gang fights • Hit/threatened to hit another person • Attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them
Deal or traffic in illicit drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sold marijuana, or hash, or any other type of drug • Sold hard drugs such as heroin, cocaine, or LSD
Robbery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used force to get money or things from another person • Used weapon to get money or things from another person
Intimate partner violence (IPV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTS2 Physical Assault and the Sexual Coercion ever prevalence sub-scales • Ever perpetrated violence against a previous partner (three questions) • Ever been subject to violence apprehension (restraining/protection) order

Table 2. Sample size and frequency of missing cases for each individual variable

	Included in analysis (n)	Missing cases (n)
Offending prevalence		
IPV	160	43
Assault	197	6
Robbery	193	10
Theft	197	6
Deception	196	7
Property damage	197	6
Illicit drugs	196	7
Any offense (incl. IPV)	198	5
Any offense (excl. IPV)	197	6
Age of offending onset	193	10
Criminal versatility	155	48
Offending frequency	187	16

Table 3. Offending predictors (prevalence) of type of homicide (separate regressions). Comparison of self-reports of male-on-male homicide (MMH; N=135) and male-perpetrated intimate partner homicide (IPH; N=68).

	MMH		IPH		Unadjusted		Adjusted*	
	<i>n</i>	valid %	<i>n</i>	valid %	OR	<i>p</i>	Partial OR	<i>p</i>
<u>Specific offenses</u>								
IPV	59	55.7	42	77.8	2.79	.007	3.33	.008
Assault	120	90.2	42	65.6	0.22	.000	0.29	.006
Robbery	46	35.1	5	8.1	0.16	.000	0.22	.004
Theft	115	86.5	34	53.1	0.17	.000	0.27	.001
Deception	33	24.8	10	15.9	#	#	0.67	.366
Property damage	85	63.9	23	35.9	0.30	.000	0.56	.117
Illicit drugs	82	62.1	16	25.0	0.20	.000	0.30	.001
<u>Overall offending index</u>								
Any offense (incl. IPV)	128	96.2	58	89.2	#	#	0.68	.590
Any offense (excl. IPV)	127	95.6	51	79.9	0.18	.001	0.32	.048

* Adjusted for the time of age at the homicide (partial OR=1.11-1.13; p=.000).

Poor model fit (as per goodness-of-fit)

Table 4. Age of onset offending predictors of type of homicide. Comparison of self-reports of male-on-male homicide (MMH; N=135) and male-perpetrated intimate partner homicide (IPH; N=68).

	MMH		IPH		Unadjusted	
	<i>n</i>	valid %	<i>n</i>	valid %	OR	<i>p</i>
<u>Age of onset (any offense)</u>					2.59	.003
Early onset (age 12 or under)	72	55.8	21	32.8		
Late onset (age 13+)	57	44.2	43	67.2		

Note. Model not adjusted for offender age at time of homicide (see Method).

Table 5. Offending versatility predictors of type of homicide. Comparison of self-reports of male-on-male homicide (MMH; N=135) and male-perpetrated intimate partner homicide (IPH; N=68).

	\bar{X} MMH	\bar{X} IPH	Unadjusted		Adjusted*	
			OR	<i>p</i>	Partial OR	<i>p</i>
Versatility [#]	4.2	2.8	0.64	.000	0.74	.008

* Adjusted for the time of age at the homicide (partial OR=1.11; *p*=.000).

[#] Min 0; max 7

Table 6. Offending frequency predictors of type of homicide. Comparison of self-reports of male-on-male homicide (MMH; N=135) and male-perpetrated intimate partner homicide (IPH; N=68).

	MMH		IPH		Unadjusted		Adjusted*	
	<i>n</i>	valid %	<i>n</i>	valid %	OR	<i>p</i>	Partial OR	<i>p</i>
<u>Any offense (excl. IPV)</u>								
No/low frequency [#]	22	17.3	35	58.3				
Medium frequency	51	40.2	18	30.0	0.21	.000	0.29	.004
High frequency	54	42.5	7	11.7	0.08	.000	0.14	.000

Note. Offending frequency was measured on a 4-point Likert scale. The total scores across the offending behaviors were summated. The scale was divided into three categories: low frequency (lower tertile), mid-level frequency, and high frequency (upper tertile).

* Adjusted for the time of age at the homicide (partial OR=1.10; p=.000).

[#] Reference category